

# Pastoral Care *Newsletter*

*For Member Care Committees,  
Ministry and Counsel, Overseers,  
and others who provide pastoral care  
in unprogrammed Friends meetings*

*Vol. 13, No. 1 • September 2005*

## High School and Young Adult Friends in Our Meetings

### **The Rock and the Whale: A Parable for Pastoral Care of Young Friends by Zac Moon**

*I had a vision of our young Friends experiencing Quakerism like a rock in the middle of a vast ocean. They found it safe and solid but also hard and cold. There was resentment because it wasn't going anywhere, and there was also a feeling of false safety that it wouldn't require anything of them. And so, there they sat—waiting.*

*And then that rock began to move underneath them. As they looked down, they found that what they had thought was a rock was actually an enormous whale. Alive, dynamic, and powerful, it demanded to know whether they were prepared to swim in the ocean of light and darkness. Were they ready to dive deep and experience the Divine presence?*

*There was a moment of hesitation. Fear began to rise in their hearts, and the newness of this vision unsettled their understanding. And then the fear was replaced by exhilaration, passion, hope. They could feel at their fingertips the immense living power of this gentle, vibrant, mysterious creature. They didn't know where it would take them. But they were ready to commit to the adventure.*

In the summer of 2004, I invited recent high school graduates in Pacific Yearly Meeting to gather prior to our yearly meeting sessions for a week-long residential program. Housed on the floor of San Francisco Meeting, we talked deeply and intentionally about matters of Quakerism, of mysticism and resistance, of the spirit from which Friends' testimonies have emerged. Older Friends participated with them, sharing themselves and their experiences, their spiritual paths, and their struggles to be faithful. They shared their leadings, their experience in ministry, their authentic encounters with Spirit, and shared their hopes and visions for the future. These Friends are whale riders, those who have committed to the struggle to hold on and swim deep. It was contagious.

We went to deep places together. The young people wrestled with their experience of the divine and their own hopes for the future of Quakerism. We began to understand our own experience in a language true to our mystical roots. When we arrived at yearly meeting, these

Teenaged and young adult Friends share many of the same pastoral care concerns as other-aged Friends in our meetings, yet they also offer some singular gifts, opportunities, and challenges to those charged with pastoral care. Not the least of the challenges is to ensure that high school and college age Friends do not fall between the cracks when they outgrow the First Day School and don't yet have the attention of the pastoral care committee. Among the concerns raised by some Young Friends is their "invisibility" as Friends in the meeting. Claire Reddy, a Young Friend active in wider Quaker circles, wrote in the Spring 2005 issue of *FGC Connections*, "I've been attending Durham Friends Meeting since I was born, and I feel like most members of the meeting have no idea who I am."

In this issue of *Pastoral Care Newsletter*, we bring you a range of voices of younger Friends and their older supporters, who remind us that we have an opportunity as Friends to engage our young adults in a vibrant faith community that recognizes their gifts and that challenges them to grow in the Spirit.

from the editor

young Friends didn't just want to hang out with their friends. They were eager to enter into dialogue and relationship with older Friends, deepen their own spiritual practice, and invigorate the Religious Society of Friends.

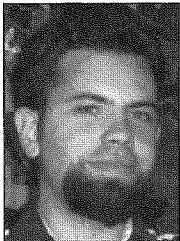
We did that in just six days.

Over the past years, I have experienced an emerging ministry. Too often the young adults in our midst are not taken seriously as people of spiritual power in our community. My message is simple: we all, young and old, must participate in Quakerism with the vision of the whale. We must release the impulse to cling to the rock. To get there we will have to take ourselves, each other, and God seriously.

Quakerism is real. The searching out of God in this bodily lifetime is real. It is in this searching that we experience the deepest senses of joy and struggle. When was the last time a community of Friends expressed that to its young people in word and practice?

We can experience the deep, living water of God's ever-flowing spirit. Opening to that is the heart of pastoral care. And it is the living future of Quakerism. □

*Zac Moon is a birthright Friend, and a member of Strawberry Creek Meeting in Berkeley, CA. He completed his undergraduate studies in history at Vassar College in 2004. He currently serves on committees for his monthly meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting, and Friends General Conference. He carries a concern for intergenerational community building within Quakerism and is engaged in ministry to this end.*



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## Nurturing Friendly Pilgrimages

by Jonah McDonald

*"It was okay—I guess I learned about my faith tradition—but it was something I did because I turned 12, and it wasn't really a life-changing thing at all. It was just another thing."*

Many faith traditions mark an individual's transition from adolescence to adulthood with ordained rites of passage—bar and bat mitzvahs, confirmation, and catechism. Oftentimes, these rituals do not hold a deep spiritual resonance for those coming of age. In part, this may be because religious communities expect youth to participate in a prescribed rite at a certain age as a matter of course; the rite is *pro forma*, rather than a pilgrimage chosen by the individual when the individual is ready to make or recognize a life change.

Consistent with its overall avoidance of ritual and "forms," the Society of Friends does not mark the transition from childhood to adulthood or between other stages of life with formal rites of passage. Nonetheless, as Friends, we experience natural transformations throughout our lives, and it seems important that we observe these transitions mindfully and that we share with our faith community the workings of the Spirit in our lives as we make them.

### Seeing Transitions as Pilgrimages

I have come to see these transitions in the form of pilgrimages that transform our lives and change our relationship with Spirit.

Two years ago, I went on a major pilgrimage on the Appalachian Trail, hiking from Maine to Georgia. Since then, I have been worshipping about how we all experience transformative journeys in our lives, often failing to recognize them as such until they are over. How can we be more mindful of the changes occurring in our

lives? In what ways can our meetings better support and nurture Friends in their personal pilgrimages, whether they are chosen (journeys that we consciously choose to embark on, such as hikes, travel, discernment processes about accepting a new job, etc.) or uninvited (journeys that emerge organically from life experiences like a broken leg, a birth, a job loss, etc.)?

Existing Quaker structures and processes are available to support those who choose a pilgrimage and those who accept a significant life change as a spiritual pilgrimage. Through clearness committees and support committees, we are able to help Friends test and season their leadings about undertaking a pilgrimage, identify and clarify goals, and develop structure for the pilgrimage without prescribing the path or results of their journey.

It is sometimes more difficult for a Friend to accept a life change as a pilgrimage and to seek help from the meeting. Often uninvited pilgrimages are very individual affairs; we struggle by ourselves, and these journeys often feel quite lonely. In meetings that encourage Friends to recognize and accept life changes as part of a spiritual pilgrimage, a person may be less reluctant to ask for a clearness or support committee. Thus, the meeting is able to help the Friend approach these transformations more mindfully and with the community support they may need.

### Some Guidelines for Friendly Pilgrimages

In assisting Friends—young and old—to consider their pilgrimage leadings, those charged with pastoral care might keep the following guidelines in mind:

- There is no requirement that one go on a pilgrimage, there is no age at which one should be expected to undertake a pilgrimage, and there is no prescribed thing that all pilgrims should be expected to do.
- The would-be pilgrim must initiate the process. The pilgrim's own recognition and acceptance of a life transition as a pilgrimage is essential. This may be a process of discernment for the pilgrim in consultation with the meeting.

To help people feel more comfortable asking to go on a pilgrimage, the meeting community might:

- Be particularly attentive to pilgrimage leadings. If pilgrimages are recognized as an important part of the community, individuals will feel more empowered to undertake their own journeys with the blessing and support of the meeting. Individuals might also be able to see certain significant life changes as an opportunity to accept a pilgrimage and to seek the support of the meeting in undertaking it.
- Use the clearness committee model to provide support for a pilgrim. A clearness committee can work with the pilgrim to develop his or her own journey or ritual being mindful that a pilgrimage should be tailored to the Friend's skills and loves and should also challenge the pilgrim to go beyond his or her comfort zone.

- For someone involved in an accepted pilgrimage, the meeting can use the clearness committee model to help the pilgrim develop practices that facilitate mindfulness on his or her journey. Simply listening is often the most beautiful gift a community can give to a pilgrim.
- The meeting can support younger Friends and others by making pilgrimage opportunities known to them and making monetary support available.

With some work, your meeting can develop a process by which individuals can be formally supported by the meeting in their chosen or accepted pilgrimages. Because transitions have no age boundaries, creating a pilgrimage program can also facilitate more intergenerational dialogue within your meeting. By fostering a mindful approach to the transformative life journeys of its members, your meeting can also become a more closely knit spiritual community.

*For additional guidance about designing and conducting a pilgrimage, more information about Jonah's experience, and a reading list, visit <http://www.friendhypilgrim.com>.*

**Jonah McDonald** is 26 years old, a life-long Friend who is transferring his membership from Memphis Monthly Meeting to Atlanta Monthly Meeting. He serves on the AFSC Board of Directors and teaches middle and high school humanities in Georgia. His pilgrimage on the Appalachian Trail led him to the work of supporting others' pilgrimages.



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## SAYF Teens Nurture Each Other With Gentle Guidance from Adults

by Wren Hendrickson

For the past eleven years, Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF) has thrived under the care of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA). One of the reasons for its success is the degree to which pastoral care, oversight, and planning are undertaken by youth leaders.

SAYF is a vibrant group of about 50 Young Friends from 7<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> grades from Friends meetings throughout SAYMA. It holds seven weekend retreats annually. Hosted by participating meetings in the five-state region, the retreats regularly draw about 35 teens—several newcomers complementing a loyal group of regular attenders.

### Youth Leadership at Heart of SAYF Success

SAYF is guided by a Nurturing Committee of Young Friends and a Steering Committee of adults. These two committees meet together annually to discuss issues of the

SAYF community, make policy decisions, and conduct overall planning.

The Nurturing Committee is open to any teen who has attended at least eight SAYF retreats and feels led to serve on it. Generally between 10 and 12 Young Friends serve on that committee at any one time. It sets the tone for the community, keeps a focus on practicing Quaker process, and attends to the needs of individuals and the community as a whole.

The Steering Committee supports Young Friends' leadership, providing guidance to the teens as they discern the needs of their peers and take responsibility for creating a caring community based on Quaker process, spirituality, and values.

In my experience, teenagers look to each other for emotional support, and it is often difficult for adults to give them support directly. Their

*SAYF is an effective community because Young Friends take ownership.*

need to be respected and understood can cause conflict with the adults in their lives. They need to know that they will not be judged before they will trust adults or confide in them. At the same time, in their efforts to create a self-supportive teen community, Young Friends sometimes need adult guidance to realize their goals.

Working as adults and teens together, SAYF has achieved a workable balance, creating a teen-led community in which the teens care for one another and their community, and the adults stay in the background and yet remain accessible when guidance is needed. The adults also emphasize the use of traditional Quaker processes, such as worship sharing, silent worship, meetings for business, and clearness committees, because our overall goal is to come together within the context of a Quaker spiritual community.

SAYF is an effective community because Young Friends take ownership of it, and adult advisors remain mindful of teens' need to develop their own sense of individual and corporate responsibility. Young Friends think through what elements are needed to create a caring community, what expectations, rules or guidelines are required, and how to best communicate them to newcomers. (Guidelines are rules, which cannot be broken without consequences; expectations are the behavioral goals of the community.)

Each retreat begins with an opening circle. The Nurturing Committee explains its role and reviews the guidelines and expectations for the weekend, and then participants engage in a candlelight worship sharing around a query relating to the theme of the retreat. Both explaining and modeling the method and consciousness of the community, this process also creates an atmosphere that invites personal sharing at whatever level the participant chooses. Retreat activities encourage

community building, deepen spirituality, and explore Quaker themes. There is also plenty of free time when bonds of friendship are forged and strengthened. Friends emphasize openness, inclusiveness, and acceptance of others; cliquishness is noted and discouraged.

### Middle- and High-Schoolers Grow Together

A noteworthy feature of SAYF is that it includes middle schoolers with high schoolers, which benefits teens in both age groups. Middle school teens do not often have a chance to interact as equals with older teens; they are usually separated both at school and in First Day School. In SAYF, they enjoy associating with, and being accepted by the older teens. They also are influenced by the greater maturity and higher expectations of the high schoolers, particularly with respect to social interaction and peer support.

Realizing the importance of setting a positive example for the younger members of the community, older teens learn to be "elders," defining and modeling the behavior that maintains the community values of caring, inclusiveness, respect, and reverence for the operation of the Spirit. The age span also enables Young Friends to make an investment in SAYF, knowing that they can grow within the organization over a period of years, developing leadership and nurturing qualities as they follow in the footsteps of those who nurtured them.

Retreats throughout a wide geographic area also give Young Friends in SAYF opportunities to broaden their horizons and the range of Friends with whom they can interact. Beyond strengthening the bonds with the teens in their own meeting in situations outside the meeting, they have a chance to relate to many more Young Friends within a Quaker context.

Living together for a weekend many times a year in a worshipful environment fosters deep friendships and bonds of mutual support among Young Friends and their meetings that strengthens SAYF and contributes to the vitality of the larger SAYMA community. □

*Wren Hendrickson has served on the Steering Committee and been an active adult participant in SAYF for six years. She is a member of the Chapel Hill (NC) Friends Meeting and is active on the Youth Religious Ed committee. Wren is a goldsmith and the mother two teens, Max(15) and Alexia (18).*



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*Do we invite Friends to dive deep into living waters?*

## Creating a Quaker Bar/Bat Mitzvah

by Matt Sanderson and Patricia McBee

### Matt's Experience:

A couple of summers ago, my friend Megan Kietzman-Nicklin invited several young people in our meeting to join her in having a Quaker bar/bat mitzvah—to do a year of studying to learn about the Quaker religion. I was the only other teen who showed an interest. Megan and I felt that, like a lot of young people, we didn't get the idea of Quakerism from our limited time in First Day School. Since we were both planning to become adult members of the community, we felt we should know how it works.

At her mother's suggestion, Megan asked one of the adult members of our meeting, Pat McBee, to help us learn about Quakerism. We met at Pat's house once a week after school. After asking us what we wanted to learn about, Pat proposed a syllabus of topics for us to cover. We discussed one subject a week. We started with

*Since we were planning to become adult members of the community, we felt we should know how it worked.*

a brief period of worship, and we had snacks like apples and really great homemade peanut butter during our discussions. Often we read a brief passage from *Faith and Practice* and discussed it point by point. Pat usually led the discussion, but each of us shared

our thoughts and experiences on the topic.

We talked about being centered in meeting for worship, what it means to be centered, and how to stay centered. It's hard to describe. It's not just being silent; it's clearing your mind, quieting your own thoughts, and using your whole body to listen for a message from the Holy Spirit or God or whatever you believe in. That discussion really enriched my experience of meeting for worship. I used to sit there and think; now I make a much greater effort to listen.

We talked about Quakerism in general, including different styles of meeting for worship, and we also discussed how the meeting works. I understand more about what committees do, how they bring issues back to the meeting for business and how that helps the process and allows meeting for business to be less muddled. I didn't really understand how the nominating process worked. I just thought people volunteered for things. Now I really appreciate what the Nominating Committee does.

I also learned how we are *all* responsible for the meeting for worship, the meeting for business, and the life of the meeting. I particularly remember discussing how when someone is sick the community tries to be there for them. I didn't know that we took that much responsibility for the community's well-being. Everyone takes responsibility and gives what they have. Growing up, I just

went to meeting for worship. Now I know how much goes on!

When Pat went away for a month in the winter, Megan and I looked for other Friends who could teach us things. We talked with the clerk of our meeting, Arthur Larrabee, about what clerking is like and what it means to the meeting. We met with Andrew Esser-Haines for a Young Adult Friend's perspective. Because we wanted to become more active in meeting, we asked him about what it was like for him to be in the stage beyond where we were—serving on a committee, attending worship regularly, and generally taking a more active role in the meeting. Everyone we met with emphasized the importance of what we were doing to learn about Quakerism and how the meeting works.

### Celebration and Reflection at Year's End

At the end of the next summer, our families arranged for an intergenerational celebration at the meetinghouse with a lot of our friends and members of the meeting. It started with a meeting for worship in which Megan and I spoke about our experience and what we had learned. Others spoke out of the silence of their experiences and about what we had done. Afterwards, we enjoyed refreshments, music, and food together.

We felt that we accomplished the goals we had set: learning more about Quakerism as a whole, about Quaker process and policy, and about Friends who are different from us. Both Megan and I are taking on leadership among Young Friends. She is co-clerk and I am assistant co-clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Young Friends, and I am one of the co-clerks of Young Friends for next year's Friends General Conference Gathering.

As I look back on our year, it was a revelation to me that we had access to all of this knowledge and support from the adult community of our meeting, that they were willing to put in that amount of time and effort. Once we began this project, a lot more of the adults in the meeting started asking us about it and talking to us. I became aware of the amount of knowledge I could tap. Somehow, I didn't know I had that option.

To other Young Friends who want to know more about Quakerism, I say go for it. If you don't know anybody who would be willing to work with you, ask your parents for suggestions. Based on our experience, I know there are people in your meeting who would be happy to talk to you about Quakerism.

### Pat's Perspective:

Sometimes pastoral care is about just being available when opportunity presents itself. It was easy to respond when these two young people came to me. I was flattered

at their invitation and delighted to spend an hour a week with them. The distance between young people and adults in the meeting runs both ways—Matt didn't realize that he could tap the adult community; I didn't know how eager these young people were to learn.

Megan and Matt were serious about learning about Quakerism. They came *every* week and continued even when I wasn't available. We had planned to meet September through March, but we were not through our syllabus by then, so they proposed meeting until the end of June. We met for just one hour each week. Due to their homework load, they didn't have time to do advance reading, so we did the reading as part of a session.

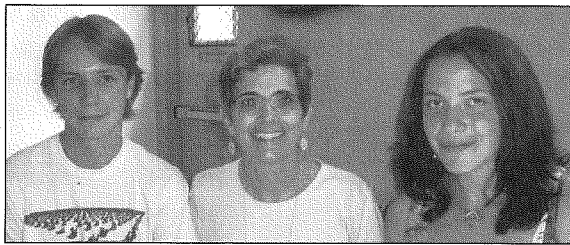
Our syllabus started with worship and spirituality. We talked about our concepts of the Divine and about our experience of the Spirit in our lives. We practiced different ways of centering. We spoke about prayer and about care of the meeting for worship. We moved on to talking about how the meeting works: meeting for business, committees, financial support of the meeting.

Then we looked at the wider Quaker community: quarterly meeting, yearly meeting, Friends General Conference, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends United Meeting, Evangelical Friends, Conservative Friends, the large numbers of Friends in Africa and South America. We explored discerning leadings and about living out our experience of the Spirit both as individuals and as a community of Friends. We talked about Quaker organizations for witness in the world, such as AFSC and FCNL. Finally, we discussed Quaker quirks and foibles, the ways Friends fail to live up to our ideals, and how we keep trying. It was a privilege to explore these topics with these two younger Friends.

Of course, a bar/bat mitzvah class is not for everyone. Other teens in the meeting turned down the opportunity to join us. The essence of our time together was that Megan and Matt felt the desire to learn and that older members gladly shared with them when asked. □

*Matt Sanderson is a member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. He is entering his senior year of high school.*

*Patricia McBee, also a member of Central Philadelphia Meeting, is the former editor of Pastoral Care Newsletter.*



*Matt Sanderson, Patricia McBee, and Megan Kietzman-Nicklin*

*Are we mindful of our responsibility to attend to the spiritual needs of Young Friends as they face burdens in their lives—divorce of parents, isolation, bullying, sexual identity, career discernment, military service and conscientious objection...?*

## RESOURCES

### Books

*Big Questions—Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith*, by Sharon Daloz Parks. Jossey Bass, 2000.

*Whispers of Faith: Young Friends Share Their Experiences of Quakerism*, ed. by Geoffrey Black, P. Zion Kolos, Claire Reddy, Milam Smith, and Rachel Stacy. Quaker Press of FGC, 2005.

*Who Do We Think We Are? Young Friends' Commitment and Belonging*, Swarthmore Lecture. Quaker Home Service, 1998.

### Articles

"The Importance of Friendship Between Adult and Young Friends," by Claire Reddy, *FGC Connections*, Summer 2005.

"The Quaker Sweat Lodge," by George Price, Feb. 2002, *Friends Journal*, p. 18.

"Rites of Passage into Adulthood," by A. Malcolm Campbell, Nov. 2003, *Friends Journal*, p. 22.

"Staying Connected with Young Adult Friends," by Deborah Shaw, *PCN*, Vol. 9, No. 4, June 2002.

"Young Adult Quaker Ministers: Mary Fischer and Elizabeth Fletcher," by Barbara Luetke-Stahman, Feb. 2002, *Friends Journal*, p. 14.

### Quaker Pilgrimage Experiences

AFSC's Study Abroad at the University of Namibia. Semester or academic year in Africa.

<http://www.afsc.org/apep/StudyAbroad/PTPOverview.htm>.

AFSC's Summer Project in Mexico. Youth from the Americas, Europe, and the indigenous communities of Xilitla Mexico work on community projects; share from their diverse cultures and experiences; and learn ways to address current and future political, ecological, and economic challenges. <http://www.afsc.org/latinamerica/int/mexicosummer.htm>.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Camping Program. See <http://www.bym-rsf.org/camping/index.html>

Friends World Committee on Consultation Quaker Youth Pilgrimages. Friends 16–18 learn Quaker history and process, strengthen their relationship with God, and experience the diversity of Friends' traditions while traveling, living, and working together for a month during the summer. Every two years. <http://www.fwccamericas.org/whatwedo/youth.html>.

Pendle Hill Social Action/Social Witness Internship Program. Internships for those 18 and older to grow in spiritual activism, living in the Pendle Hill community and working with youth and leaders in Pendle Hill's Chester program. [www.pendlehill.org/social\\_action\\_social\\_witness\\_internships.htm](http://www.pendlehill.org/social_action_social_witness_internships.htm).

Pendle Hill Summer High School Youth Camp. Ten-day workcamp, discussions, outings, community-building with diverse group of teens. [www.pendlehill.org/youth\\_camp.htm](http://www.pendlehill.org/youth_camp.htm).

Pendle Hill Young Adult Leadership Development Program. A summer of service, learning, and spiritual development for youth 18-24. [http://www.pendlehill.org/young\\_adult\\_leadership\\_development\\_programt.htm](http://www.pendlehill.org/young_adult_leadership_development_programt.htm).

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's China Summer Workcamp. Young people from the U. S., Japan, South Korea, and China to work together with local middle-school students on environmental projects. [www.pym.org/workcamp/China/china.htm](http://www.pym.org/workcamp/China/china.htm).

Quaker Peacebuilder Camp. Two-week summer program. Learn community organizing and nonviolent action skills with diverse group of inner city, suburban, and rural teens. Contact John Humphries at [jhumphries@igc.org](mailto:jhumphries@igc.org).

YouthQuake. National conference for youth from full spectrum of the Religious Society of Friends. Every three years. Next YouthQuake December 2006 through January 1, 2007. <http://www.youthquake.org/default.htm>.

### Weblogs

Enter the "blogosphere" at one of the addresses below, and you will be introduced via links to other young Quakers exploring the dimensions of their faith and involvement with the Religious Society of Friends.

"Youth Ministries" is one of several provocative threads maintained by blogger "Quaker Ranter," a/k/a Martin Kelly, a Young Adult Friend in New Jersey. ([http://www.nonviolence.org/quaker/youth\\_ministries](http://www.nonviolence.org/quaker/youth_ministries))

"Spiritual Journey" is a blog by Claire Reddy, co-clerk of 2005 FGC Gathering High School Program. (<http://quakerspeak.blogspot.com/>)

### Questions for Reflection

1. How do Friends in our meeting seek that of God in high-school-aged and Young Adult Friends?
2. How do we nurture the growth of younger Friends in the Spirit?
3. Does the meeting provide opportunities for deeper involvement and greater responsibility in the life of the meeting as children mature into young adults?
4. How does our meeting's approach to the nurture of our high-school-aged and Young Adult Friends promote the goal of a Religious Society of Friends made up of members by mature conviction?
5. Does our meeting recognize and support individual pilgrimages as a way for Friends to be mindful about life transformations?
6. In what ways can our meeting invite and welcome Young Friends to share and integrate their gifts of insight, seeking, observation and ministry into the life of the meeting?

*Pastoral Care Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Editorial Committee: Susan Heath, clerk, Suzanne Day, Patricia McBee, Carolyn Terrell. John Meyer, interim editor. We are located at 1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. Comments are welcome. **Please do not duplicate without permission.** To obtain additional copies or to subscribe, contact Steve Gulick, at 215-241-7068 or [steveg@pym.org](mailto:steveg@pym.org).